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## Protein protects brain from damage, may prevent neurodegenerative diseases

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Researchers at the University of California, San Diego and the Salk Institute for Biological Studies have found a protein that protects the brain from the kind of damage that can lead to Parkinson's disease. This protein, called Nurr1, has a long history in Parkinson's disease research. People who carry a mutation in the gene are prone to developing the disease. The new work explains how the protein prevents Parkinson's disease and could also help researchers find ways of treating or preventing the disease. The protein was especially important in two types of cells that protect and support the brain's neurons -- called microglia and astrocytes. In these cells, Nurr1 works with other proteins to limit inflammation after an immune response. Without it, these support cells produced toxic by-products that damaged the nerves in a way that could lead to Parkinson's disease or other neurodegenerative diseases.

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